

16. UNUSUAL ESCAPE BEHAVIOUR IN GOLDENBACKED WOODPECKER *DINOPIUM BENGHALENSE* (LINN.)

While watching a pair of Goldenbacked woodpeckers (*Dinopium benghalense*) on 20th July 1993, I had an interesting observation. The pair was foraging on a coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera*) at a height of about 6 m from the ground, the male bird being approximately 1.5 m above the female.

A male Shikra (*Accipiter badius*) appeared, uttering his loud ringing calls and alighted on a tamarind tree nearby. The woodpeckers responded quickly. The male flew to a Jack tree (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*) promptly followed by the female. The Shikra still continued his loud calls, but could not be seen as he was hidden by the foliage.

The male woodpecker apparently unconcerned, clambered about on the jack tree and continued feeding. Meanwhile the female was nowhere in sight,

but careful scanning revealed her clinging upside down on the lower side of a stout branch which was at an angle of 70° with the main trunk. The female remained in this seemingly awkward position for about 2 minutes without any movement. Later after the Shikra had flown away, she clambered up on the upper surface and joined her mate.

This pattern of escape behaviour is not common among woodpeckers and hence is noteworthy.

October 9, 1993

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17. THE GREYTHROATED OR PLAIN SAND MARTIN *RIPARIA PALUDICOLA* VIEILLOT - A NEW BIRD FOR SOUTHERN INDIA

During the course of the Asian Wetland Counts, 1993, I came across at least five individuals of the Greythroated or Plain Sand Martin (*Riparia paludicola*) in the Kole Wetlands, near Thrissur town, Kerala. The birds were noticed flying over the wet and freshly ploughed paddy fields along with Common and Red-rumped Swallows (*Hirundo rustica* and *H. daurica*). The birds flew very low and quite close repeatedly, permitting a good view. The presence of the swallows enabled a good comparison of size and plumage. Photographs were taken and these enabled positive identification.

The birds were distinctly smaller than the swallows and had a short, less forked (almost squarish) tail. The overall plumage was dull. The upper parts were greyish brown with a conspicuously paler rump. The chin, throat and the upper breast were darker (brown or grey) than the whitish lower breast and belly. No markings or spots could be seen on the tail feathers. These features helped in identifying the birds as Greythroated Sand Martins.

I have seen these birds on an earlier occasion

near Chilka Lake in February 1987 and am familiar with the superficially similar looking Collared Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*), having seen it on several occasions in Madras, Lakshadweep, S. Arcot district (near Kaliveli Tank) and at Pulicat Lake environs (Andhra Pradesh).

The 'HANDBOOK' (Ali and Ripley 1983) records Maharashtra (Bombay, Nasik, Satara, etc.) and Orissa as the southern most range of this species and therefore the present sighting further south is noteworthy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank S. Anitha, R. Nandakumar and Sanjeev Kumar who accompanied me on this occasion and R. Kannan for going through this manuscript and offering criticism.

June 24, 1993

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